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AUTHOR Ramirez, Alfonso R.
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ABSTRACT

Project H-200 is a series of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) lessons for the primary grades. To supplement direct language instruction by the Project H-200 classroom teacher, two mechanical aids have been devised. These units are designed to reinforce the language patterns that the children learn in the daily lesson. One type projects a filmstrip which is advanced automatically and inaudibly by the accompanying recording. Stories interesting to small children have been adapted for this machine. Songs and language drills accompany each story. Each story has a Spanish and an English version. The other unit, which plays back a six-second recording on individual, illustrated cards, permits endless repetitions of each recorded utterance but does not guarantee a fixed sequence of illustrations and sounds. Additional activities, songs, and games have also been created. Testing has been modified into a telephone-circuit arrangement with the examiner and tape recorder, the subject, and a third party. This system permits the examiner to ask the subject questions that are perfectly normal and avoids unnatural statements such as "Ask me what my name is." (VM)

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H-200 PLUS FIVE

Alfonso R. Ramirez

The southernmost tip of Texas, bounded on the east by the Gulf of Mexico and on the south and west by the Rio Grande River, has been predominantly Spanish-speaking since its colonization in the 1750's. It was not until the late 1960's, however, that a systematic method of teaching English to the Spanish-speakers was introduced in the schools of the area. It was the ESEA Title III legislation that provided the impetus that had been lacking. In an unusual and commendable display of unanimity, the superintendents of schools--there are nearly 50 school districts in that region--agreed to combine all of the resources available to them under that act and title and to commit them to a curriculum revision project aimed at establishing a sound ESL program for their primary classrooms.

By fortunate coincidence, Project H-200 in California was nearing completion at this time. The Office of Education had provided funding for UCLA and the California State Department of Education to write a series of ESL lessons for children in the primary grades. When permission to use these lessons in the Texas project was granted by the California authorities, the unaltered H-200 lessons became the base upon which the new curriculum plans and materials were built.

Now known as ROCK--Region One Curriculum Kit--the materials are available in two parts, Levels I and II. The first kit, intended for children entering school with little or no command of English, consists of a variety of materials needed for the suggested activities that provide practice in using the language forms taught in the H-200 lessons. These include synchronized filmstrip-record sets of folk tales in Spanish and in English, recorded language cards for either the Language Master or Audio-Flashcard machines, recordings of songs in Spanish and in English, and most of the illustrations and realia needed to teach the

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language lessons. The two-volume teacher's manual includes the 128 lessons, the suggested related activities, and detailed instructions for art, cooking. The Level II Kit contains only the manuals, the illustrations and the realia needed for the 115 lessons. Though over 700 classrooms from coast to coast have a set of these materials, there is no way to determine how many are being used as intended nor how effective they have been. Favorable reports from the Boston area, from New Jersey, and from parts of California and Oregon compare with the successful South Texas experience but even in our own project there are classes that do not seem to benefit sufficiently from the revised curriculum.

The ROCK materials were tested in California and Texas with non-English speaking Mexican-American children from the ages of five through seven. In California the field test was conducted while the lessons were being written. The Texas field test began in three classes, grew to twelve the following year, and forty the third year. In California the test was on the lessons alone, used in a "pull-out" situation, while in Texas we were testing the total ESL curriculum in a self-contained classroom.

Realizing that the concept of an itinerant ESL specialist was out of the question in Texas schools--it later proved impractical in California also--the Region One staff devoted its efforts to planning a five or six hour daily program centered around the thirty minute H-200 lesson. Experiences in FLES programs and the advice of others convinced the project director that a foreign language could not be learned in thirty minute lessons taught once a day. Foreign language instruction to groups of 25 to 30 was also out of the question, particularly for learners under eight years of age.

The task then, was one of planning activities for the groups not engaged in direct instruction by the classroom teacher. Traditional "busy work" is not a viable method of providing practice in second language acquisition. Some way had to be devised to give the children language experiences and practice by mechanical means.

After several months of study, the search narrowed down to two types of voice reproducing machines--both capable of presenting a visual with an auditory stimulus. One unit projects a filmstrip which is advanced automatically and inaudibly by the accompanying recording. Here the sequence of images and sounds and the length of the presentation is fixed. No variation for individual differences is provided. The other unit, which plays back a 6 second recording on individual illustrated cards, permits endless repetitions of each recorded utterance but does not guarantee a fixed sequence of illustrations and sounds.

Material for both types of equipment had to be prepared because the few items commercially available at that time were not suited for the principal purpose--that of reinforcing the language patterns the child was learning in the daily lesson. In the case of the synchronized filmstrip the choice of content was unlimited, except by our resources. Filmstrip production using original art is a long and expensive process. We planned to produce from 15 to 20 sets in both English and Spanish in one year. These were to be stories interesting to small children--primarily traditional folk and fairy tales. We produced two of our own and added our sound to fifteen selected from various producers.

The Spanish version of each story was prepared without any attempt to control the vocabulary or the sentence patterns. The dialect is one familiar to most Mexican-American children--that of northeastern Mexico. But the English versions of the same filmstrips were carefully planned and sequenced. The stories chosen for the early part of the year have a limited vocabulary and are told in the progressive tense using sentence patterns taught in the early lessons. Later in the sequence the English version approaches an unrestricted style. One talented person, Carol Perkins, wrote and narrated both versions, as well as composing songs and language drills for each story.

Second language acquisition requires that the learner have many opportunities to hear the new utterances and as many opportunities to produce them. The other device selected is ideally suited to the task of tireless tutor. A drawing of a boy approaching a closet with a coat in his hand is printed or pasted on a card. On the magnetic tape also attached to the card is recorded the following: "What's he going to do?" (2 - 3 Second pause) "He's going to hang up the coat." When a child plays this card on the appropriate machine, he is challenged to respond to a question, given time to answer, and then told the correct answer. If he has difficulty answering, he can play the card as many times as he wishes.

Three hundred eighty-five of these cards were produced for the kit. They are available in either Bell & Howell or Electronic Futures Inc. format. Because they are ideally suited for practice on specific patterns a teacher can make individual assignments to pupils during the entire year. The cards also provide the child with a variety of models to imitate (at least four different voices are heard on the cards.).

Additional activities that serve to generate language appear in the Appendix indexed by types -- art, songs, games, etc. These suggestions are sometimes linked to specific lessons, such as the lyrics of a song that are identical to language forms taught in a particular lesson, but for the most part the teacher can choose those she considers to be most nearly suitable to her needs.

One activity that is recommended daily is "Sharing Time". Early in the morning the teacher gathers the children around her and a blank chart and she elicits comments from them, in either language, concerning their experiences the previous day. She chooses a few of the comments, such as "Pedro said, 'We went to Reynosa last night'," and writes them on the chart. No other activity, performed daily, has as many positive values as this one. It provides a permanent record of language growth, practice for oral expression, readiness for reading, and opportunities for developing self-esteem--the self-concept of each child.

While no control over the "proper" use of the lessons and related activities has been attempted, there has been an interest in determining the effectiveness of the instructional packages, and since oral proficiency can only be measured by an oral test administered individually, the amount of data that have been collected is relatively small, as compared to the number of kits in use. Still another limiting factor has been the unavailability of a test that could be regarded as a fair measure of the language proficiency of children five and six years of age. In spite of these limiting factors, testing has been a part of the development of the materials since 1968.

The instrument used initially was the Michael Test of Oral Language Proficiency, designed by the late Lois Michael, one of the writers of the H-200 Lessons. The test has been evaluated by the Southwest Cooperative Educational Laboratory in Albuquerque, present owner of the test materials. Our experience with the test indicates that the items that test vocabulary and pronunciation are of little value because no significant differences have been found between experimental and control groups in tests administered by us. We also found that the items that measure control of syntax included many "Ask me" commands. Contrivances are undoubtedly necessary in language tests but requests like "Ask me what my name is" are so unnatural that even native English speakers hesitate before answering.

Our solution was to eliminate vocabulary and pronunciation items and concentrate on the sentence patterns taught in the lessons. In order to remove the microphone and the awkward questioning we arranged a telephone circuit with the examiner and the tape recorder at one end of the line, and the subject, another telephone and a third party at the other end. This system permits the examiner to ask the subject questions and to direct the pupil to ask questions that are perfectly normal under those circumstances. For example: "Pedro, is someone there with you?" ("Yes.") "What's his name?" ("I don't know.") "Ask him." ("What's your name?") "Do you know what he ate for breakfast?" ("No, sir.") "Ask him." ("What did you eat for breakfast?")

Further refinements of this test are needed but the technical problem of recording the responses and the problem of directed questions have been solved. The results of the 1970-71 tests indicate that pupils who are taught English through H-200 lessons, both Level I and Level II, score significantly higher than pupils in control groups.*

The effectiveness of the H-200 lessons will vary with the quality of the reinforcing activities in which the pupils participate. It is also possible that children who are not instructed through the lessons but who are given a well-rounded program of language-evoking experiences may score just as high on any test of oral language production yet devised.

Teacher resistance to the "new" methods is noticeable during the first few months. After mid-year no teacher has been willing to give up her manual.

Teacher opinion of the lessons is generally high, particularly during the second year when the effects of the daily lesson begin to be noticed. A few teachers have even suggested that English speakers would benefit from a modified H-200 course.

Administrative support for this primary ESL curriculum is essential during the first year. Special equipment is needed, as well as appropriate furniture. This initial capital outlay could run as high as one thousand dollars, though classrooms have been equipped for as little as four hundred dollars. The annual per pupil cost, calculated over the life of the materials and equipment should not exceed ten dollars, or slightly over five cents per day per pupil.

Until the H-200 graduates complete their elementary education we will not be able to measure the "residual gains." The experience of the first five years, however, has not diminished our expectations. We are seeing positive results each year--children with confidence in their ability to express themselves in English without giving up their mother tongue. This, we feel, justifies our efforts and the federal expenditures that supported them.

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*Linton, Thomas H. Unpublished Final Evaluation Report on Region One Bilingual Project, July 31, 1971.